Remarks/Arguments:

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1-9 and 12-18 remain in the application. Claims 10, 11, 19, and 20 were previously cancelled.

In item 2 on page 2 of the above-identified Office action, claims 1, 2, 5, 6-9, 12, 14, and 18 have been rejected as being obvious over Menard (U.S. Patent No. 6,042,101) in view of Higashi (U.S. Patent No. 6,935,237 B2) under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Applicant respectfully notes that Higashi has a United States filing date of **April 22, 2003**. See 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). As set forth in the Declaration of record, the instant application claims international priority of the German Application No. **102 59 190.3**, filed **December 18, 2002**, under 35 U.S.C. § 119. Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §§ 119, applicant is entitled to the priority date of the German application. See MPEP §§ 201.13. Thus, the instant application predates Higashi by more than four months. Because Higashi was filed after the priority date of the instant application, applicant

respectfully believes that Higashi is unavailable as prior art.

Applicant acknowledges that perfection of priority can only be obtained by filing a certified English translation of the German priority application. See 35 U.S.C. § 119. Applicant filed a Claim for Priority including a certified copy of German application **102 59 190.3** on August 26, 2003. Concurrent herewith, applicant is filing a certified English translation of same. Accordingly, applicant respectfully believes that priority has been perfected and Higashi is unavailable as prior art. Therefore, applicant respectfully submits that the Section 103 rejection in item 2 on page 2 of the Office action are now moot.

In item 3 on page 4 of the Office action, claim 16 has been rejected as being obvious over Menard (U.S. Patent No. 6,042,101) in view of Higashi (U.S. Patent No. 6,935,237 B2) and further in view of Pratt (U.S. Patent No. 5,889,313) under 35 U.S.C. § 103. As noted above, the Higashi reference is not available as prior art. Therefore, claim 16 is allowable as well.

In item 4 on page 4 of the Office action, claims 3 and 13 have been rejected as being obvious over Menard (U.S. Patent No.

6,042,101) in view of Higashi (U.S. Patent No. 6,935,237 B2) and further in view of in view of Ganton (U.S. Patent No. 6,130,702) under 35 U.S.C. § 103. As noted above, the Higashi reference is not available as prior art. Therefore, claims 3 and 13 are allowable as well.

In item 5 on page 6 of the Office action, claim 4 has been rejected as being obvious over Menard (U.S. Patent No. 6,042,101) in view of Higashi (U.S. Patent No. 6,935,237 B2) and further in view of Nakamura et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,499,807) (hereinafter "Nakamura") under 35 U.S.C. § 103. As noted above, the Higashi reference is not available as prior art. Therefore, claim 4 is allowable as well.

In item 6 on page 7of the Office action, claim 15 has been rejected as being obvious over Menard (U.S. Patent No. 6,042,101) in view of Higashi (U.S. Patent No. 6,935,237 B2) and further in view of Nakamura et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,499,807) (hereinafter "Nakamura") under 35 U.S.C. § 103. As noted above, the Higashi reference is not available as prior art. Therefore, claim 15 is allowable as well.

It is appreciatively note from item 7 on page 8 of the Office action that claim 17 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base

claim and any intervening claims. The claims have not been amended as indicated by the Examiner, as the claims are believed to be patentable in their existing form.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claims 1 or 12. Claims 1 and 12 are, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art and since all of the dependent claims are ultimately dependent on claims 1 or 12, they are believed to be patentable as well.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-9, 12-16, and 18 are solicited.

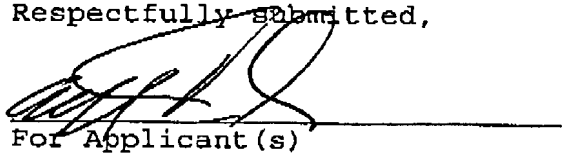
In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel respectfully requests a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out.

If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made.

Applic. No. 10/650,051
Amdt. dated April 27, 2007
Reply to Office action of March 29, 2007

Please charge any other fees which might be due with respect to Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the Deposit Account of Lerner Greenberg Stemer LLP, No. 12-1099.

Respectfully submitted,



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For Applicant(s)

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April 27, 2007

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